

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSC-01

DRC-01 /150 W

----- 123454

R 131810Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9267

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: LIKELY SHAPE OF FORTHCOMING CHANGES IN
FEDERAL GERMAN GOVERNMENT

REF: BONN 16917

1. SUMMARY: SPECULATION IS RIFE IN BONN OVER POSSIBLE
CHANGES IN THE MAKEUP OF THE GERMAN CABINET IN
THE LIKELY EVENT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER SCHEEL (ALSO FDP
PARTY CHAIRMAN) DECIDES TO SEEK THE FEDERAL PRESIDENCY
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NEXT SPRING. PRESENT BETTING AMONG INFORMED OBSERVERS

IS THAT FINANCE MINISTER HELMUT SCHMIDT (SPD) WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD SUCCEED SCHEEL AS FOREIGN MINISTER. SCHMIDT WOULD IN TURN PROBABLY BE SUCCEDED IN HIS PRESENT POSITION BY KLAUS-DIETER ARNDT (SPD), PRESENTLY PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH IN WEST BERLIN. THE FDP WOULD BE APPEASED BY BEING GIVEN THE JUSTICE MINISTRY. OTHER LESSER CHANGES IN IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT POSITIONS MAY ALSO BE IN THE OFFING. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF INTER-PARTY AND INTRA-PARTY TUGGING AND HAULING AND POLITICAL INFIGHTING PRESENTLY UNDERWAY. END SUMMARY.

2. IN NORMAL TIMES, BONN IS A VERY POLITICAL TOWN, WITH GOSSIP ABOUT WHO IS DOING WHAT TO WHOM ALWAYS A NATURAL TOPIC OF COCKTAIL, LUNCHEON AND DINNER CONVERSATIONS. THE APPARENT INTENTION OF FONMIN SCHEEL (ALSO FDP PARTY CHAIRMAN) TO SEEK THE PRESIDENCY NEXT

MAY (REFTEL) HAS MADE THE USUALLY ACTIVE ANTENNAE OF POLITICAL OBSERVERS VIBRATE EVEN MORE THAN USUAL. MOST OF THEM TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT SCHEEL WILL ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION TO RUN IN EARLY JANUARY, AFTER HE HAS EMERGED FROM HIS KIDNEY-STONE OPERATION AND RECUPERATION IN THE HOSPITAL.

3. SPECULATION NOW FOCUSES ON WHAT SCHEEL'S MOVING UPWARD WILL DO TO THE COALITION AND THE MAKEUP OF THE FEDERAL CABINET. SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, WHEN NEWS OF SCHEEL'S SEEMING INTENTION BECAME FAIRLY FIRM (REFTEL), IT APPEARED THAT HE WOULD BE SUCCEDED IN BOTH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND IN THE FDP PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP BY INTERIOR MINISTER GENSCHER. AS OF NOW, GENSCHER IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO SUCCEED SCHEEL IN THE PARTY JOB (ASSUMING SCHEEL OPTS FOR THE PRESIDENCY). HOWEVER, THE SPD LEADERSHIP GROUP, LED BY WEHNER AND SCHMIDT, HAS BEGUN TO PRESS HARD FOR AN SPD REPRESENTATIVE TO TAKE OVER THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. AFTER SOME TO-ING AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRO-ING, FINANCE MINISTER SCHMIDT HAS EMERGED AS THE LEADING CONTENDER. HE CERTAINLY WANTS THE JOB AND MAKES NO SECRET OF HIS DESIRE.

4. INTERIOR MINISTER GENSCHER IS STILL IN THE RUNNING FROM THE FDP SIDE, BUT MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER THAT THE FDP CASE IS JUST NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO WARRANT THEIR GAINING THE PRESIDENCY AND STILL RETAINING THE FOREIGN

MINISTRY. PRESENT BETTING AMONG THOSE IN BONN WILLING TO QUOTE ODDS IS SCHMIDT IS ABOUT A FOUR-TO-ONE FAVORITE TO WIN THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S JOB. IT IS EXPECTED THAT, IF THIS IS THE CASE, GENSCHER WILL REMAIN IN THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, A POSITION WITH WHICH HE IS SAID TO BE SATISFIED.

5. THERE ARE VARIOUS RUMORS AS TO WHO MIGHT REPLACE SCHMIDT IN THE FINANCE MINISTRY, WITH GENSCHER'S NAME ALSO FIGURING AMONG THE POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS. THE MOST FAVORED NAME AT PRESENT, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, IS KLAUS-DIETER ARNDT (SPD), PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH LOCATED IN WEST BERLIN. ARNDT IS YOUNG (46), FORMERLY A STATE SECRETARY IN THE ECONOMICS MINISTRY UNDER MINISTER SCHILLER, AND IS

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REGARDED AS A SOUND ECONOMIST.

6. IN ORDER TO PLACATE THE FDP, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO PRESS FOR HOLDING ON TO A MINISTERIAL POSITION IN EXCHANGE FOR GIVING UP THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, THE SPD LEADERSHIP IS SAID TO BE PREPARED TO DUMP JUSTICE MINISTER JAHN (SPD) AND ALLOW HIM TO BE REPLACED BY WERNER MAIHOFFER (FDP), PRESENTLY MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO. MAIHOFFER IS REGARDED AS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE AND INTELLIGENT MEMBERS OF THE FDP LEADERSHIP. HE IS ALSO A LAW SCHOLAR WITH AN INTERNATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPUTATION.

7. RELATED TO THE APPARENT SPD READINESS TO GIVE UP THE JUSTICE MINISTRY SPOT TO THE FDP IS ANOTHER POSSIBLE CHANGE OF LESSER SIGNIFICANCE. IT CONCERNS GOVERNMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN, VON WECHMAR (FDP), WHO IS SAID TO BE ANGLING FOR THE AMBASSADORSHIP IN ROME. HE IS UNHAPPY WITH HIS POSITION IN BONN SINCE HE IS EFFECTIVELY KEPT OUT OF THE INNER CIRCLE AROUND BRANDT. HIS WIFE IS ALSO SAID TO BE INTENT ON GETTING TO ROME. CURRENT SPECULATION IS THAT VON WECHMAR WOULD BE REPLACED BY CHANCELLERY STATE SECRETARY GAUS (SPD), A FORMER NEWSMAN AND NOW SLATED TO BE THE FRG'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE IN EAST BERLIN, IF AND WHEN THIS MISSION IS EVER ESTABLISHED. IF GAUS DOES TAKE THE PRESS SPOKESMAN JOB, THEN THE EAST BERLIN POSITION WILL NATURALLY GO TO SOMEONE ELSE, BUT THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM.

8. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SPD LEADERSHIP GROUP, PRIMARILY LED BY WEHNER (WHERE BRANDT STANDS IN ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE REORGANIZATION IS NOT CLEAR), HOPES THAT ASSUMPTION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S JOB BY STRONG SPD TYPE LIKE SCHMIDT WILL BRING CONTROL OF FOREIGN POLICY BACK INTO THE HANDS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. IT HAS BEEN FELT THAT SCHEEL AND THE FREE DEMOCRATS HAD INCREASINGLY TAKEN OVER THIS SPHERE, TO THE SPD'S GREAT DISCOMFORT.

9. COMMENT: IF, IN FACT, SCHMIDT DOES SUCCEED SCHEEL, THEN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WILL HAVE AT ITS HEAD A FAR

MORE PRICKLY, ASSERTIVE AND INTELLECTUAL INDIVIDUAL. HE WILL NOT BE AN EASY MAN FOR ANYONE, INCLUDING OURSELVES, TO GET ALONG WITH. BUT HIS INSTINCTS ARE BASICALLY SOUND AND HE TOOK A VERY STRONG PRO-US STANCE DURING HIS TENURE AS DEFENSE MINISTER FROM 1969 TO 1972. HIS ASSUMPTION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY POSITION WOULD ALSO CAUSE SEVERE PROBLEMS FOR CHANCELLERY MINISTER EGON BAHR, WHOM SCHMIDT WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT ALLOW TO PLAY ANY SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN POLICY ROLE.

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10. COMMENT: WHAT THIS REORGANIZATION AND MOVING AROUND WILL AMOUNT TO IN TERMS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S EFFECTIVENESS IS AN OPEN QUESTION. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE MUSICAL CHAIRS OPERATION IN THE CABINET IS NOT APT TO HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT ON GERMANY POLICIES, DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN, UNLESS THE CHANCELLOR HIMSELF PROVIDES STRONGER LEADERSHIP THAN HAS BEEN EVIDENT RECENTLY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, PARTY LEADERS, REORGANIZATIONS, GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BONN17983
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731227/aaaaauap.tel
Line Count: 248
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BONN 16917
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <20-Sep-2001 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LIKELY SHAPE OF FORTHCOMING CHANGES IN FEDERAL GERMAN GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PINT, GE, (SCHEEL, WALTER)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005